



Armed Conflicts Report

Israel-Palestine (1948 - first combat deaths)

Update: February 2009

Summary

Type of Conflict

Parties to the Conflict

Status of the Fighting

Number of Deaths

Political Developments

Background

Arms Sources

Economic Factors

Summary:

2008 The situation in the Gaza strip escalated throughout 2008 to reflect an increasing humanitarian crisis. The death toll reached approximately 1800 deaths by the end of January 2009, with increased conflict taking place after December 19th. The first six months of 2008 saw increased fighting between Israeli forces and Hamas rebels. A six month ceasefire was agreed upon in June of 2008, and the summer months saw increased factional violence between opposing Palestinian groups Hamas and Fatah. Israel shut down the border crossings between the Gaza strip and Israel and shut off fuel to the power plant mid-January 2008. The fuel was eventually turned on although blackouts occurred sporadically throughout the year. The blockade was opened periodically throughout the year to allow a minimum amount of humanitarian aid to pass through. However, for the majority of the year, the 1.5 million Gaza Strip inhabitants, including those needing medical aid, were trapped with few resources. At the end of January 2009, Israel agreed to the principles of a ceasefire proposal, but it is unknown whether or not both sides can come to agreeable terms and create long lasting peace in 2009.

2007 A November 2006 ceasefire was broken when opposing Palestinian groups Hamas and Fatah renewed fighting in April and May of 2007. In June, Hamas led a coup on the Gaza headquarters of Fatah giving them control of the Gaza Strip. This saw an immediate blockade of goods from Israel and the international community, which has left three-quarters of Palestinians in Gaza living in poverty. Palestinian militants continued to attack the Israeli border area with crude rockets, which led to retaliation by Israel. While death tolls decreased from 2006, almost 400 people were killed in Israeli-Palestinian exchanges, most being Palestinian, and over 400 Palestinians died as a result of factional fighting within the Gaza Strip.

2006 Ehud Olmert replaced an incapacitated Ariel Sharon as Israel's Prime Minister in January. After Hamas' election victory early in the year, a power struggle between Hamas and President Abbas' Fatah party led to violence and failed attempts to form a unity government. The election of Hamas led a number of international actors and the Israeli government to cut funds to the Palestinian Authority. In response to the kidnapping of an Israeli soldier, from July to November Israel launched intensified military offensives in Gaza. Fighting in Gaza was overshadowed, however, by a 34-day war between Hezbollah and Israel. Fighting in Gaza and factional Palestinian fighting led to the deaths of nearly 1,000 people this year.

2005 The Israeli government unilaterally removed ground troops and dismantled its settlements in Gaza while continuing to expand settlements in the West Bank. Israeli Prime Minister Sharon quit the Likud party and created a new party, Kadima, triggering elections for early 2006. After a brief lull, fighting resumed following a breakdown in an informal ceasefire between Palestinian militants and the Israeli army. Approximately 275 people, mostly Palestinians, were killed.

2004 Violence continued as Palestinian suicide attacks on Israeli civilians and major Israeli military operations in the occupied territories killed more than 900 people. Long-time Palestinian leader Yassar Arafat died in November. The Israeli cabinet and Parliament approved a plan drafted by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to completely withdraw troops from the Gaza strip and dismantle Israeli settlements. Sporadic clashes and Israeli air strikes in Lebanon also continued, killing at least 20 people.

2003 Violence continued through most of the year, barring a two month hiatus that followed the unveiling of a "road map" peace process backed by the US. This process envisioned a Palestinian state by 2005, but was stalled before the end of the year. In spite of new Palestinian suicide bombings and Israeli "anti-terror" operations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the death toll declined significantly from the previous year. A controversial security fence which the Israeli government began constructing in the West Bank to prevent attacks against Israeli citizens drew heavy criticism from the international community.

2002 Violence escalated again this year as Israeli forces invaded a number of cities and refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and seized Yassar Arafat's Ramallah compound. An estimated 1,600 people died from Israeli attacks and Palestinian suicide bombings, most of them civilians.

2001 The year saw a dramatic increase in violence in the form of suicide bombings, raids, Israeli retaliations and targeted assassinations. In February, right wing leader Ariel Sharon became Israel's Prime Minister and in an early speech announced he would not negotiate with Palestinians until violence and terror attacks stopped. By July, the Israeli security cabinet voted powers to the army to "liquidate" anyone it suspected of being a terrorist. There were at least 700 conflict related deaths in Israel and the Palestinian territories. In Lebanon, raids, mortar attacks, and Israeli reprisals resulted in at least 30 more conflict deaths amid claims that Iran had increased military aid to Hezbollah guerrillas in southern Lebanon. In November, the United Nations announced a reduction in its UN Interim Force in Lebanon.

2000 Violence between Israeli security forces and Palestinian demonstrators escalated dramatically in September following an Israeli opposition leader's provocative visit to Muslim holy sites in East Jerusalem. Security forces responded to Palestinian protests with lethal force and violent clashes soon spread to other parts of the West Bank, Gaza, and Israel. Elsewhere, an increase in attacks by Hezbollah forces resulted in the early withdrawal of Israeli troops from southern Lebanon and the collapse of the Southern Lebanon Army (SLA). Lebanon rejected UN verification of the withdrawal, claiming Israel still held Lebanese territory, and the Hezbollah used this as a basis for further attacks. At least 400 people (mostly Palestinians) died during the year, a significant increase from last year.

1999 Violent confrontations between Israeli security units and Palestinian demonstrators accompanied radical Palestinian group attacks on Israelis in the occupied territories and Israel. In Lebanon, rebels conducted rocket assaults on northern Israel, and Israeli forces shelled Lebanese villages and bombarded rebel targets, as well as civilian infrastructure. More than 100 died in the conflict, the majority in Lebanon.

1998 Conflict violence continued in 1998 as Israeli security forces killed Palestinian demonstrators and Israelis and Palestinians alike died in revenge attacks and suicide bombings. In Lebanon, guerrilla attacks were met with frequent Israeli artillery and air attacks on suspected rebel bases. At least 110 people died, including 80 killed in Lebanon, fewer than the estimated 250 people killed in 1997.

1997 During 1997 the "Oslo II" peace process was in shambles as Israeli security forces killed Palestinians in violent demonstrations triggered by stalled peace talks, new Israeli housing construction in the West Bank, and anti-Islamic posters, while suicide bombings attributed to Hamas guerrillas killed civilians in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Meanwhile, the conflict escalated in Lebanon as frequent Israeli air assaults on rebel bases and Hezbollah guerrilla bombings and rocket attacks claimed the highest toll on Israeli troops in more than a decade.

Type of Conflict:

State formation

Parties to the Conflict:

1) Government of Israel:

Israel's current government began 2008 with Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and his Kadima party, who were re-elected in March, 2006. Olmert had become the acting Prime Minister in January 2006, when former leader Ariel Sharon suffered a major stroke, and officially took the post of Prime Minister after March 2006 elections. In 2008, Olmert decided not to stand for re-election as Kadima party leader and resigned his office in September after Tzipi Livni gained the Kadima leadership. Difficulty in forming a new coalition government in late 2008 forced a general election which was scheduled for February 2009. [2008 Human Rights Report: Israel and the occupied territories. Bureau of Democracy, Labor and Human Rights, U.S. Department of State, 2009.]

"Israel has launched air raids in Gaza and deployed tanks and infantry across the border after it vowed a severe response to rocket attacks on its soil." [BBC News, 17 May, 2007]

"A military spokesman said the force was on a 'defensive operation'. The move came after Hamas militants fired more rockets at the southern Israeli town of Sderot." [BBC News, 17 May, 2007]

2) Palestinian Opposition Groups:

a) Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)

The PLO, led by President Mahmoud Abbas, is the internationally recognized representative body of the Palestinian people. The PLO gained observer status at the UN in 1974. The PLO is a multi-party confederation which includes the following factions:

Al Fatah, a political party which controlled the Palestinian legislature until early 2006

Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)

Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP)

Arab Liberation Front (ALF)

Palestine Popular Struggle Front (PPSF)

Palestinian Communist Party (PCP)

Palestinian Liberation Front (PLP).

b) Palestinian (National) Authority

Under the 1994 Oslo agreement between the PLO and the Israeli government, the Palestine (National) Authority, became the governing body of the semi-autonomous Palestinian regions. The PNA was to be an interim governing body pending final negotiations of Palestine's status. The PNA is distinct from the PLO, and it is the PLO that is recognized internationally as the legitimate representative body of the Palestinian people. The PNA was first led by President Arafat, and, beginning in 2003, an appointed Prime Minister. Mahmoud Abbas was elected President of the PNA in January 2005, following the death of Yassar Arafat in November 2004. Abbas, like his predecessor, is a member of the Fatah party.

In January 2006, Hamas (See below in section c) won parliamentary elections, and formed the new Palestinian government in February, with Ismail Haniyeh becoming the Prime Minister. Hamas – whose name comes from an acronym of Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamia, the Movement of Islamic Resistance—has long been considered by many international actors and Israel as a terrorist organization, and many countries have refused to recognize Hamas as the government of the Occupied Territories, withdrawing aid to the PNA. Though Hamas won the parliamentary elections, Mahmoud Abbas remained the President. Abbas' Fatah party and Hamas were not able to form a unity government during 2006 and tension between the two parties continued to rise throughout the year.

On March 17, 2007, the unity government was finally formed under Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh: it was made up of members from Hamas, Fatah, and other parties and independents. The new government was short-lived, being dismissed on June 15, 2007 by Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas, a day after the Hamas takeover of Gaza.

The PNA administers an armed police force of between 40,000 and 80,000 members.

c) Other groups opposed to the Israeli government

A number of other armed groups and political movements opposed to the Israeli government have also been involved in the conflict. Many of these groups are, or have been, supported by Arab states including Syria, Iraq, and Libya.

Hamas -- an acronym of Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamia (the Movement of Islamic Resistance) with the Izz

a-Din al-Qassam Brigade, its military wing. Besides playing a prominent political role in winning Palestinian elections in 2006, Hamas made its military presence felt during 2007 by forcibly taking control of the Gaza Strip in June and launching missiles into Israel since then.

The Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine (PIJ) is another major militant group in the Gaza Strip which has sent missiles into Israel during 2007. PIJ has frequently clashed with the much larger Hamas group. Its militant wing is called the Al-Quds Brigades.

Hezbollah, a Lebanese-based paramilitary organization whose primary goal is the elimination of the State of Israel

Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades

Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)

Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP)

Fatah Tanzim

Palestinian Resistance Committees ((PRC)

[Listed as being active groups by *The Military Balance 2008*]

3) International Actors:

a) United States Government: The U.S. government continues to be the largest supplier of military aid to Israel, as well as a strong backer of Israeli military policies. As a member of the Quartet (see below), the U.S. has also been a key actor in the promotion of the "roadmap to peace" plan for a negotiated settlement to the conflict.

b) Quartet on the Middle East, or more simply the "Quartet" is a group of four countries and international/supranational bodies involved in the mediation process of the Israel/Palestine conflict. The Quartet is comprised of the United States, Russia, the EU and UN.

c) United Nations: Along with other members of the Quartet, the UN has been a player in promoting a negotiated settlement to the conflict. The UN has a long-standing involvement in the conflict as it was a UN partition that led to the creation of the State of Israel, and UN resolutions continue to shape the politics of the region. The UN has also deployed a number of peacekeeping missions to the region.

Status of Fighting:

2008 In the first six months of 2008, the death toll reached 380 Palestinians civilians compared to 25 Israeli soldiers. When a ceasefire was reached in June 2008, the fighting between factions was relatively minimal and although it did occur, the ceasefire held for five and a half months. During that time, fighting escalated between Fatah and Hamas, as well as between settler populations and Palestinians in settler areas. In late November, Israel launched a raid into the Gaza Strip in response to cross-border tunnelling and rocket attacks. This broke the relative calm of the previous months and violence between Hamas and the Israelis escalated again. On December 28, 2008, the Gaza Strip region saw an escalation of violence to the highest level in the four decades of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, resulting in 1,300 Palestinians reported dead, including many hundreds of civilians.

[2008 Human Rights Report: *Israel and the occupied territories*. Bureau of Democracy, Labor and Human Rights, U.S. Department of State, 2009.]

2007 In April and May 2007, sectarian fighting broke out between Hamas and Fatah breaking a ceasefire that had been in place since November 2006. In June 2007 Hamas seized a major Fatah headquarters in the Gaza Strip, effectively giving them control of the region. This coup also ended the unity government that President Abbas had been hoping could work with Israel to define two separate states. Militants in the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip began launching frequent offensive strikes on Israeli border towns with crude rockets, which led to air and ground attacks by the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) and the Israeli Air Force (IAF).

"The major Fatah headquarters in the Gaza Strip fell to fighters of the rival Islamist Hamas movement on Thursday after a fierce hours-long battle...The success for Hamas came as

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas was reported considering firing the coalition cabinet of the fragile unity government." [Associated Foreign Press, 14 June, 2007]

"The unity coalition involving President Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah group and the Hamas Islamists of Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, formed in March, has not prevented clashes that have killed more than 60 Palestinians since Saturday." [Reuters, 13 June, 2007]

"Five days of revenge attacks on individuals – including executions, kneecappings and even tossing handcuffed prisoners off tall apartment towers – on Tuesday turned into something larger and more organized: attacks on symbols of power and the deployment of military units. About 25 Palestinians were killed and more than 100 wounded, Palestinian medics said." [International Herald Tribune, 12 June, 2007]

"Israel has launched air raids in Gaza and deployed tanks and infantry across the border after it vowed a severe response to rocket attacks on its soil." [BBC News, 17 May, 2007]

"In Wednesday's violence, Israeli troops killed seven militants, including at least three Hamas members, in an operation east of Gaza City, Hamas and Palestinian medical officials said. Five gunmen were wounded, Hamas said. The body of the seventh militant, killed overnight, was turned over to Palestinian medics by Israel. The military said he was killed while trying to infiltrate into Israel." [Associated Press, 2 January, 2008]

2006 After Hamas won Palestinian elections and formed the government early in the year, factional fighting between Hamas and Abbas' Fatah party erupted over control of their respective security forces, raising fears of civil war. After the kidnapping of an Israeli soldier in late June, Israel launched a major military offensive in Gaza, including incursions, air strikes and bombardments, killing hundreds and destroying a number of power and water plants, in order to end Palestinian rockets being launched at Israeli towns, and to force the return of the kidnapped Israeli soldier. Fighting intensified in the shadow of the war in Lebanon, and continued until a cease-fire took hold in late November.

"Israel has pounded Gaza with more deadly air strikes as Prime Minister Ehud Olmert defended the massive military offensive in the face of international criticism and calls for restraint.... At least 44 Palestinians and an Israeli soldier have been killed since Israel poured tanks and troops into the Gaza Strip last Wednesday in a bid to stop Palestinian rocket attacks and secure Corporal Gilad Shalit's release. Despite the mounting deaths, Israel has warned troops are likely to be in for the long-haul, rejecting a call by Palestinian prime minister Ismail Haniya for a mutual ceasefire but denying it intends to topple his Hamas government." [Sakher Abu El Oun, AFP, July 10, 2006]

"A fierce gun battle erupted yesterday outside the Palestinian parliament building between rival Palestinian forces, killing one man, wounding about a dozen people and deepening the sense of anarchy gripping the Gaza Strip... Tensions in Gaza have been mounting since Hamas took power in March. They soared last week when Hamas sent a new 3,000-member police force into the streets, in explicit defiance of Abbas's veto of its employment. Since then, gunmen from the Hamas contingent and those of Abbas's Fatah faction have engaged in an easy standoff, eyeing one another while laying claim to adjacent street corners." [Laura King, Los Angeles Times, May 23, 2006]

2005 Fighting subsided early in the year after the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli government agreed to a mutual ceasefire and a unilateral ceasefire was announced by Palestinian militants. The Israeli government removed its ground forces from Gaza while retaining military control over Gaza's sea, borders and air space. Fighting escalated in the second half of the year as the informal truce between Palestinian militants and the Israeli army unravelled. Palestinian militants carried out several suicide bombings within Israel and launched rockets into Israel from Gaza. The Israeli army carried out several raids and air bombings within the occupied territories. Palestinian security forces also clashed with Palestinian militants on several occasions. Attacks on and clashes between Israeli settlers and Palestinians and human rights abuses by the Israeli army and Palestinian armed groups within the occupied territories continued.

"The trigger for the upsurge in violence was an explosion at a Hamas rally in the Gaza strip last

week which killed 21 people. A mishandled Hamas rocket, said both Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA), which obliquely called it a "work accident". An Israeli missile attack, insisted Hamas, which then proceeded to launch over 40 Qassam rockets into Israel...But Israel, as it had promised to do if attacked after its recent withdrawal of settlers and troops from Gaza, hit back with renewed force, launching more than a dozen air strikes on Gaza." [*The Economist*, September 30, 2005]

"A truce in February largely cooled the uprising that erupted on Sept. 28, 2000, and the calm helped smooth Israel's pullout from the Gaza Strip...However, fighting in recent days has added to pessimism over ending decades of Israeli-Palestinian conflict..." [Matthew Tostevin, *Reuters*, September 28, 2005]

"Palestinian police and Hamas militants clashed in gunbattles in the northern Gaza Strip yesterday, leaving at least 13 wounded in the worst internal fighting since before the outbreak of the Palestinian uprising five years ago." [Joshua Mitnick, *The Washington Times*, July 20, 2005]

2004 Palestinian attacks on Israeli civilians and intense Israeli military operations in the occupied territories killed over 900 people. An Israeli air strike killed Hamas founder and spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin and seven others and in June Israel launched a massive incursion into the Gaza strip that left 40 dead and 2,000 homeless. Clashes along the Israeli-Lebanon border and Israeli air strikes into Lebanon also continued.

"Six months of relative quiet in Israel ended Tuesday as two suicide bombers blew up two buses 100 yards apart in this southern town, killing at least 16 people, including a 4-year-old, and wounding more than 100, many of them seriously." [*New York Times*, September 1, 2004]

"Fourteen Palestinians were killed and dozens were wounded Wednesday during Israeli Army raids into Gaza City and a town in the southern Gaza Strip, Palestinian witnesses and hospital officials said." [*New York Times*, February 12, 2004]

2003 Palestinian militants used guerrilla tactics, often suicide bombings targeting Israeli citizens and soldiers, and Israeli security forces responded with "anti-terror" military operations in Palestinian areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Israeli forces also carried out targeted assassinations against leaders of Palestinian militant groups, primarily Hamas, resulting in the deaths of several Palestinian leaders, including Hamas co-founder Ibrahim Makadme, and dozens of Palestinian civilians. A June ceasefire announced by Hamas and Islamic Jihad remained mostly intact for almost two months. However, a suicide bombing in Jerusalem in August and retaliatory strikes by Israeli forces ended the brief period of calm.

The Lebanese-Israeli border remained tense as sporadic shelling of the disputed territory of Shebaa Farms, reportedly by Hezbollah, was met with Israeli air strikes against suspected Hezbollah positions in Lebanon. Israel also launched a bombing raid on Syria, the first in over two decades, due to the latter's alleged support for Palestinian militant groups.

"IDF Special Forces killed four Palestinians, three of them armed, in a large anti-terror sweep in the West Bank city of Ramallah Monday... Large IDF forces ... operated in the West Bank City of Ramallah since the early hours of Monday morning against the city's terrorist network - with special attention be paid to Hamas." [Jerusalem Post, December 1, 2003]

"Early yesterday Israeli fighter jets launched their first bombing raid on Syria for more than two decades in retaliation for the weekend bomb that exploded in Haifa... Israel claimed that the Ein Saheb camp 14 miles northwest of Damascus, was a training base used by Islamic Jihad, Hamas and al-Qaeda terrorists. Syria denied this, insisting that it was a civilian facility." [*Times Online*, October 6, 2003]

"At least 20 people were killed and more than 100 wounded last night when a suicide bomber blew himself up on a Jerusalem bus ... Both Hamas and Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the explosion ..." [*The Scotsman*, August 20, 2003]

"Israeli warplanes attacked suspected Hezbollah positions in southern Lebanon yesterday, hours after the group shelled northern Israel, killing a 16-year-old and lightly wounding five others,

including an infant. The boy was the first civilian killed in an attack by the guerrilla group in the area since Israel pulled out of southern Lebanon in May of 2000, officials said." [*Associated Press*, August 11, 2003]

"A deadly explosion ripped through a bus in Haifa yesterday, killing at least 16 people and bringing a bloody end to a two-month lull in Palestinian attacks on Israeli cities... Hours after the suicide bombing, a missile fired from an Israeli helicopter killed at least 11 Palestinians during an armoured sweep through a Gaza refugee camp ..." [*globeandmail.com*, March 6, 2003]

2002 In March, Israel launched "Operation Defensive Shield," a major military offensive, on the main cities of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in response to increased suicide bombings by Palestinian militants. Amnesty International later accused Israeli forces of war crimes against Palestinian citizens in Jenin and Nablus and the UN General Assembly passed a May resolution condemning Israel's military action in the Jenin refugee camp. Overflights and bombing of Lebanese territory by Israeli military aircraft continued while Hezbollah rebels shelled the Shebaa Farms region on Israel's border with Lebanon in April in retaliation for Israeli attacks on the West Bank. The resurgence of violence raised fears that a new military front was opening in the disputed border area.

"Israel launches its biggest military offensive for 20 years, sending 20,000 troops and more than 150 tanks into the West Bank and Gaza Strip." [*BBC News*, March 12, 2002]

"There is 'clear evidence' that Israeli soldiers and their commanders committed war crimes against Palestinian civilians— including unlawful killings and torture – during a three-month campaign last spring in two Palestinian cities in the West Bank, the human rights group Amnesty International charges in a report to be released Monday... [T]he human rights group cites the killing of Palestinian women and children, the 'wanton' destruction of houses, the torture of Palestinian prisoners and the use of Palestinian civilians by Israeli soldiers as 'human shields' during military operations." [*washingtonpost.com*, 2002. The report is available at www.web.amnesty.org/ai.nsf/index/mde150422002]

"In what is being described as one of the biggest attacks in two years, Hezbollah targeted Israeli outposts in the disputed Shebaa region using rockets and mortar rounds." [*BBC News*, April 10, 2002]

2001 Following the election of hard-line Prime Minister Ariel Sharon early in the year there was a dramatic increase in conflict violence, with suicide bombings, Palestinian shootings, Israeli military retaliations, and Israeli targeted assassinations being weekly, and at times, daily occurrences. In Lebanon and northern Israel, Hezbollah raids and mortar attacks continued along with Israeli retaliations. Israeli intelligence claimed in July that Iran had increased its military support of the Lebanese guerrillas.

"Israel began its campaign of retaliation in the early hours of this morning for yesterday's Palestinian suicide bombing in Jerusalem which killed 15 people and wounded about 90." [*The Guardian*, August 10, 2001]

"The suicide bombers of Hamas delivered raw horror to the Jewish state yesterday, killing 25 people in 13 hours of carnage." [*The Guardian*, December 3, 2001]

"Iran's Islamic regime has sent Hezbollah guerillas in south Lebanon as many as 8,000 Katyusha rockets that could easily strike most of the northern third of Israel, the officials say. Intelligence sources cited in the Haaretz newspaper said Iran is stepping up its weapons shipments to the Lebanese guerillas, airlifting hundreds of tons of arms and material via Syria in the past few days." [*The Washington Times*, July 18, 2001]

"Israeli Air Force warplanes fired missiles at the edge of the Lebanese border town of Kfar Shaaba after Hezbollah guerillas attacked IDF posts in the Har Dov area of the Lebanese border. It was the first Israeli air raid in Lebanon since July, when Israel attacked a Syrian military installation in eastern Lebanon to retaliate for Hezbollah attacks on Har Dov, which the Lebanese call the Shaaba Farms. A similar raid in April killed at least three Syrian soldiers." [*Ha'aretz*, October 22, 2001]

2000 Violence between Israeli security forces and Palestinian demonstrators continued throughout the year but escalated dramatically following Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon's provocative September visit to Muslim holy sites in East Jerusalem. Security forces responded to Palestinian protests with lethal force, killing five and wounding over 200. Violent clashes soon spread to other parts of the West Bank, Gaza, and Israel with Israeli action often involving "excessive" and "indiscriminate" force against unarmed civilians. In October, in retaliation for the mob killing of two of its soldiers, Israeli helicopters hit Palestinian militia headquarters in four cities in the West Bank and Gaza. Despite continued Israeli aerial bombings within Lebanon, an increase in attacks by Hezbollah forces resulted in the early withdrawal of Israeli troops from southern Lebanon and the collapse of the Southern Lebanon Army (SLA). Lebanon rejected UN verification of the withdrawal, claiming Israel still held Lebanese territory, and the Hezbollah used this as a basis for further attacks.

[Sources: *The Globe and Mail*, 13 October 2000; *The Guardian* 2 November 2000; *BBC News*, 16 June 2000, 14 November 2000, 7 December 2000, 7 February 2001; *The Christian Monitor*, 24 October 2000; *The New York Times*, 5 May 2000; *Yahoo Asia News*, 22 November 2000]

"The conflict is the remaining flash point in an area that until May was the site of almost daily shelling between the Hezbollah guerrillas and Israeli forces who occupied all of southern Lebanon to protect Israel's northern frontier. Hoping to stop its steady stream of casualties, Israel pulled its troops out last spring, and its locally allied militia collapsed." [*Washington Post*, 10 January 2001]

"During clashes between Palestinians and the IDF that began on September 29 ..., Palestinian security forces failed to act consistently and effectively to prevent armed civilians from opening fire on IDF soldiers or positions from places where civilians were present. This failure endangered the Palestinian civilian population when the IDF responded, often excessively and indiscriminately." [Human Rights Watch, *2001 World Report*]

"The most lethal confrontations have occurred at Joseph's Tomb in Nablus and at the Netzarim Jewish settlement in Gaza, two Israeli enclaves that the army has preserved in the heart of densely populated Palestinian areas. ... in response to Palestinian shooting, the Israeli army has used disproportionate force. It has launched helicopter rocket attacks on apartment blocks in Gaza city, and fired anti-tank missiles at Palestinian positions near Netzarim. In Nablus, tanks have been stationed in readiness around the city. Elsewhere, the army has resorted to sniper fire against stone-throwing youths and on at least one occasion ambulancemen picking up the bodies." [*The Economist*, 7 October 2000]

"Israeli warplanes repeatedly struck positions of Damascus-based Palestinian groups near the Syrian border Monday, Lebanese security sources said... The wide ranging attacks which included strikes at suspected Hizbollah guerrilla positions closer to Israel's south Lebanon occupation zone, were the heaviest for a month." [*Reuters*, 13 March 2000]

1999 Violent confrontations between Israeli security units and Palestinian demonstrators resulted in Palestinian deaths. Radical Palestinian groups, such as the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) and the Palestine Islamic Jihad (PIJ), launched a number of attacks against Israelis in the occupied territories and Israel. In Lebanon, Hezbollah militants conducted rocket assaults on northern Israel, while Israeli forces shelled Lebanese villages and bombarded Palestinian and Lebanese rebel targets, as well as civilian infrastructure.

"Israeli security forces committed a number of human rights abuses during the year. Several Palestinians were killed in violent confrontations with Israeli security units, who at times used live ammunition against Palestinian demonstrators and shot at demonstrators or individuals indiscriminately. Israeli security forces abused Palestinians suspected of security offenses. ... Extremist Palestinian groups and individuals, including the militant Islamic Resistance Movement (HAMAS) and the Palestine Islamic Jihad (PIJ), continued their efforts to undermine the authority of the PA and halt progress in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process by wounding Israelis in 3 attacks in the occupied territories and Israel." [*Israel and the Occupied Territories: Report on Human Rights Practices for 1999*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, US Department of State, 2000]

"An estimated 50 Islamic resistance guerrillas, 13 Israeli soldiers, 27 Lebanese civilians, and 2

Israeli civilians were killed in south Lebanon during the year, as Hizballah, Amal, and Palestinian guerrillas on the one hand, and Israeli forces and the SLA on the other, engaged in recurring violence. For example, on June 22, Hizballah launched rocket attacks against northern Israel, which killed two Israeli civilians, in retaliation for Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) shelling of a Lebanese village. Israeli forces conducted repeated air strikes and artillery barrages on Hizballah, Amal, and Palestinian targets, including civilian infrastructure, inside Lebanon. For example, on June 24, 9 Lebanese were killed and 50 to 80 wounded in Israeli air raids, which also targeted civilian infrastructure, including electric power transformer stations and power lines in the Beirut area, Baalbek, and Bint Jubayl, and bridges along the main coastal highway at Damour, Sidon, and Tyre." [*Lebanon Report on Human Rights Practices for 1999*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, US State Department, 2000]

1998 Conflict violence continued in 1998 as Israeli security forces killed Palestinian demonstrators and Israelis and Palestinians alike died in revenge attacks and suicide bombings. Guerrilla roadside bombings and mortar and rocket attacks in Lebanon were met with frequent Israeli artillery and air attacks on suspected rebel bases.

1997 During 1997 the "Oslo II" peace process was in shambles as Israeli security forces killed Palestinian demonstrators in clashes triggered by stalled peace talks, new Israeli housing construction in the West Bank, and anti-Islamic posters, while suicide bombings attributed to Hamas guerrillas killed civilians in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. In Lebanon the conflict escalated as frequent Israeli air assaults on rebel bases and Hezbollah guerrilla bombings and rocket attacks claimed the highest toll on Israeli troops in more than a decade.

"The early-morning salvo ... was a clear violation of the April 1996 cease-fire that ended a 17-day Israeli military campaign. The attack came in apparent retaliation for an aggressive new posture shown by Israel in a week in which 13 people have been killed, including seven Lebanese civilians." [*The New York Times*, August 9, 1997]

Number of Deaths:

Total: More than 120,000. Three wars, in 1948, 1967, and 1973, killed an estimated 100,000 people. From December 1987 to 1992, a popular Palestinian uprising in the Israeli-occupied territories, the intifada, claimed more than 1,500, mostly Palestinian, lives. Over 12,000 people, including 500 Israelis, died in the Israeli invasions of Lebanon in 1978 and 1982. An estimated 2,600 Palestinians and 800 Israelis died between September 2000 and September 2003.

"The latest death brings the total death toll since the start of the Palestinian intifada nearly three years ago to 3,453, including 2,589 Palestinians and 803 Israelis, according to an AFP count." [*Agence France Presse*, September 9, 2003]

"The abortive invasions of 1978 and 1982 led to more than 500 Israeli deaths... " [*Economist*, February 24, 1996]

In 1978 "over 2000 people were killed and 250,000 driven from their homes." Also, "At least 10,000 people, most of them civilians, were killed in this first phase of the [1982] war." [Patrick Brogan, *The Fighting Never Stopped*, pp. 310-312]

2008 The total death toll reached approximately 1800 in 2008. In the first five months of 2008, some 380 Palestinians were killed by the Israeli army. Dozens have also died within the Gaza strip due to the burgeoning humanitarian crisis with critically ill patients being denied exit to receive medical treatment. Attacks from late December to the end of January saw an additional 1300 Palestinian deaths. Palestinians suffered the brunt of the violence throughout 2008, with some 1800 deaths on their side, compared to an approximate 100 Israeli deaths.

2007 Leading Israeli human rights group B'tselem estimates death tolls for the year at 373 Palestinians killed in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, of which approximately a third were civilians. By comparison, 13 Israeli soldiers and 7 Israeli civilians were killed by Palestinians in 2007. This reflects a sharp decline in fatalities in the region from the previous year. Palestinian factional fighting within the Gaza Strip was more intense during 2007 with over 400 Palestinians dying as a result.

"The Gaza Strip has recently witnessed an unprecedented escalation in the violence between the Hamas and Fatah movements. Last week, as the fighting came to a head, Hamas decided to resolve the conflict militarily by taking over all Palestinian security headquarters and sites and seizing complete control over the Gaza Strip through its military wing – Issiddin al-Qassam Brigades. The fighting claimed the lives of 146 Palestinians (36 of them civilians), including 5 children and 8 women, and wounded at least 700 others"

[Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, *Press Release*, 18 June 2007]

"Israeli civilians killed by Palestinians: seven, a record low since the intifadah began in 2000."

[*The Christian Science Monitor*, 2 January, 2008]

"At least eight Palestinians have been killed and 20 injured in two separate Israeli strikes in the northern Gaza Strip, Palestinian officials have said...The BBC's Aleem Maqbool says previous operations in recent months have left dozens of Palestinians dead – many militants, but many civilians too – and the rockets keep being launched." [BBC News, 26 September, 2007]

"The Israeli government resisted calls Tuesday from hawkish lawmakers and angry citizens to begin a broad assault on the Gaza Strip after a pre-dawn rocket strike in an army training base wounded 69 soldiers on their last day of boot camp...In a statement sent to news agencies in Gaza, the Islamic Jihad group asserted responsibility for the attack, which the armed movement called 'Operation Victory at Dawn.' The armed wing of the smaller Popular Resistance Committee was named as a partner." [washingtonpost.com, 11 September, 2007]

"In the worst outbreak of violence in the Gaza Strip since Hamas' seizure of power, Israeli forces and helicopter warships killed 10 Palestinian fighters yesterday as Palestinian officials braced for a new wave of sectarian violence between Fatah and Islamic militants." [washingtontimes.com, 7 September, 2007]

"Israeli soldiers swept into Gaza today, killing at least 13 Palestinians in the heaviest fighting since Hamas seized control of the territory this month, the Israeli military said. In raids involving helicopters and ground troops, the troops attacked around Gaza City and near the southern town of Khan Yunis. The actions, which included searches for tunnels and explosives, were a sign that Israel intended to isolate and weaken Hamas while negotiating with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and his more moderate Fatah party." [latimes.com, 27 June, 2007]

2006 Nearly 1,000 people were killed this year. An estimated 660 Palestinians (half civilian) were killed by Israeli forces this year, mainly in Gaza, while approximately 25 Israelis were killed by Palestinians. An additional 300 Palestinians were estimated dead due to factional fighting between Fatah and Hamas.

"Israeli forces killed 660 Palestinians in 2006, well over three times as many as the year before, an Israeli human rights group said. B'Tselem, an independent body that monitors Israel actions in the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip, said at least 322 of the dead Palestinians were not taking part in hostilities when they were killed. Is said Palestinians had killed 17 Israeli civilians in the West Bank and Israel during 2006 as well as six members of the security forces. It was the lowest toll of Israelis killed by Palestinians in a full year since an uprising broke out in the West Bank in September 2000.... Most of the Palestinians were killed during the offensive into Gaza." [Conal Urquhart, *The Guardian Weekly*, January 5-11, 2007]

"In addition to the fighting with Israel, Palestinian territories have been beset by unprecedented internal violence, much of it linked to a power struggle between Hamas Islamists and president Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah. Mr. Abbas has put the death toll at well over 300." [Conal Urquhart, *The Guardian Weekly*, January 5-11, 2007]

2005 Approximately 275 people were killed this year, the vast majority (approximately 215) of whom were Palestinians. Fewer people were killed this year than in each of the four years since the beginning of the second Intifada.

[Source: *Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories*, <http://www.btselem.org/English/>]

"While the Israeli government does not release aggregate data detailing each targeted killing operation and the victims, Ya'lon [Israeli army official] told conference participants that some 110 Palestinians were killed during recent air and ground operations, all but 10 of them confirmed terrorists. But data published by the Jerusalem-based Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories indicates that 107 innocent Palestinians were killed, along with another 181 operatives targeted for assassination by Israeli security forces, in the past four and a half years." [Barbara Opall-Rome, *Defense News*, June 13, 2005]

2004 Over 900 people, the majority Palestinians, were killed in Israel and the occupied territories in 2004, including Hamas founder and spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin and his replacement. At least an additional 20 combatants were killed in sporadic skirmishes on the Lebanese border.

"During the year, a total of 76 Israeli civilians and four foreigners were killed as a result of Palestinian terrorist attacks in Israel and the occupied territories, and 41 members of the Israeli Defense Forces were killed in clashes with Palestinian militants. During the same period, more than 800 Palestinians were killed during Israeli military operations in the occupied territories." [*Israel and the occupied territories- Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - 2004*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, US State Department, February 28, 2005]

"At least 27 Palestinians and three Israelis died in fighting in Gaza on Thursday - one of the bloodiest days since the intifada began in 2000. Many civilians were among the dead and injured." [*BBC News*, October 1, 2004]

2003 Approximately 800 people were killed in 2003, with Palestinians accounting for around 600 of these deaths. Civilians continued to comprise the majority of fatalities.

2002 More than 1,500 people were killed, most of them civilians. (Of these 1200 were Palestinians and over 300 were Israelis.)

"Amnesty International estimated that 600 Palestinians were killed and 3,000 wounded by Israeli soldiers from March 1 through to mid-April." [*Israel and the Occupied Territories: The Heavy Price of Israeli Incursions*, Amnesty International, April 2002]

2001 About 700 people, the majority Palestinian civilians, died in 2001. (Since the recent Intifada began in September of 2000, one report indicates that 1,071 people have been killed in the conflict.) Ongoing violence in Lebanon took another 30 lives.

"The overall death toll from the Intifada, which began in September 2000, stands at 1,071 – including 825 Palestinians and 223 Israelis." [*Associated Press*, December 12, 2001]

2000 At least 350 people (mostly Palestinian civilians) died in Israel and the Palestinian Territories. More than 50 others, some civilian, died as a result of Israel-Lebanon cross-border attacks.

"Within three weeks, more than 120 Palestinians were killed and over 4,800 injured in clashes with Israeli security forces that began on September 29. Most of the deaths were the result of excessive, and often indiscriminate, use of lethal force by Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers, police, and border police against unarmed civilian demonstrators, including children. The casualties were disproportionately on the Palestinian side, but two Israeli soldiers were beaten to death by a Palestinian mob." [Human Rights Watch, *2001 World Report*]

"A member of the Israeli-run South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia was killed and two were wounded Thursday when shells hit their post inside Israel's occupation zone in Lebanon, SLA sources said... Sixteen SLA militiamen have been killed in guerrilla attacks so far this year and a further 19 have been wounded." [*Reuters*, 23 March 2000]

1999 More than 20 people were killed during the year in Israel and the Palestinian territories. At least 90 others died in southern Lebanon.

"PA security forces used excessive force, and in some cases, live ammunition against Palestinian demonstrators and shot at demonstrators and individuals indiscriminately... Palestinian security forces shot and killed three Palestinians during confrontations this year." [*Israel and the Occupied Territories: Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1999*, US State Department Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 2000]

1998 At least 30 people died in Israeli troop clashes with Palestinian demonstrators, in suicide bombings, and in isolated attacks on Israeli and Palestinian civilians. In Lebanon, more than 57 combatants and 22 civilians died during 1998. [One report claimed 28 civilian deaths.]

"Violence continued in northern Israel, related to attacks in southern Lebanon. According to various reports, an estimated 37 Hizballah guerrillas, 20 Israeli soldiers and 22 Lebanese civilians were killed in south Lebanon during the year, as Hizballah, Amal, and Palestinian guerrillas on the one hand, and Israeli forces and the SLA on the other, engaged in attacks." [*Israel and the Occupied Territories: Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1998*, US State Department Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, February 26, 1999]

1997 Over 200 people died in Lebanon in 1997, including 73 Israeli soldiers killed in a double helicopter collision in February. At least 40 people died in suicide bombing attacks in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem and in Israeli troop clashes with Palestinian demonstrators.

"South Lebanon violence has killed 39 Israeli soldiers, 65 guerrillas, mostly Hizballah members, and 22 SLA militiamen since the start of the year." [*Reuters*, December 23, 1997] Civilian deaths and 73 Israeli soldiers killed in a double helicopter collision, brings the total to over 200.

"Although the security forces relied more on rubber-coated bullets than in previous years, they killed fourteen Palestinians between January and July, according to B'Tselem..." [Human Rights Watch, *World Report 1998*, p.339]

Political Developments:

2008 Following a breach of the border between the Gaza strip and Egypt in January 2008, Egypt tightened border security. Israeli officials insisted that the Gaza border remain closed so long as Hamas refuses to release the Israeli soldier they are holding. The ceasefire between Israeli forces and Palestinian armed groups came into force on June 19th, at the time it looked uncertain. Following a brief period of open borders, the Israeli forces closed the border due to rocket fire and rarely opened it for the rest of the year. Approximately 8 500 Palestinians are being detained in Israeli jails, and of these 900 are from the Gaza strip, all of whom have been denied visits from families since June 2007. Due to the increasing humanitarian crisis in the Gaza strip, approximately 80% of the 1.5 million people in the strip are dependent on the trickle of international aid the Israeli army lets in. Acute malnutrition rates are rising. The ceasefire was the most important factor in reducing civilian casualties' mid-year; however it did nothing to improve the situation for the people in the Gaza strip. Throughout 2008, the UN continued to condemn Israel's 'disproportionate use of force' in the conflict. In February 2009, Amnesty International released a report indicating that foreign arms supplies are fuelling the conflict in the Gaza strip. The Hamas/Palestinian armed groups are gathering some longer range rockets from Iran and China whereas since 2002, Israel has received over \$21 billion in US military and security assistance.

"Put simply, Israel's military intervention in the Gaza strip has been equipped to a large extent by US-supplied weapons, munitions and military equipment paid for with US taxpayers' money." [*Amnesty International*, 23 February 2009]

2007 In March 2007, a unity government between Hamas and Fatah was finally formed but peace was short-lived as April and May saw a rise in attacks between the two parties and many assassinations of government officials from both parties. In June, Hamas led a coup in which it overtook the Fatah headquarters in the Gaza Strip, giving the group control of the entire region. As a result, President Mahmoud Abbas fired the Hamas-led government and replaced it with an emergency cabinet. The coup also led to the immediate imposition of border restrictions on Gaza by Israel, followed by dramatic cuts in funding by international actors leaving 75 percent of the 1.5 million residents of the Gaza Strip living under conditions of extreme poverty. In November, a one-day Middle East peace conference was held in Annapolis, Maryland which saw representatives from more than 50 nations in attendance. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel and Palestinian Authority Chairman

Mahmoud Abbas were in attendance and both signed a peace treaty that outlines resolutions for both sides to complete by the end of 2008. Israel stated it was willing to make major concessions in order to reach peace, while Abbas called for the end of Israeli occupation of all Palestinian lands. Both parties called for the release of political prisoners, and the Palestinian Authority wants Israel to halt the building of new homes in occupied lands. Peace talks between the two leaders began in December 2007, and are planned to continue through 2008 until a final resolution is found. Ongoing tensions between Hamas and Fatah complicated peace negotiations and Palestinian militants continued to launch rocket attacks on southern Israeli cities, causing Israel to retaliate.

"Hamas has made it clear that while it generally respects a cease-fire with Israel, it will do nothing to stop militant groups of the 'resistance' – including its own military wing – from firing rockets into Israel or attacking Israeli civilians." [*The New York Times*, 15 May, 2007]

"Israel is pursuing peace with Abbas' Western-backed government, which rules from the West Bank and is locked in a power struggle against Gaza's Hamas rulers. Hamas, which seized control of Gaza last June after routing Abbas' forces there, opposes the peace talks." [*Associated Press*, 2 January, 2008]

"A Palestinian peace process that does not include Hamas cannot be viable, the head of the U.N. Palestinian refugee agency said on Wednesday, after talks in the United States to try and revive the effort. Karen AbuZayd, head of the U.N. Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), said more political pressure was needed to resolve the split between rival Palestinian factions Fatah, which controls the West Bank, and Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip." [*Reuters*, 28 November, 2007]

"President Mahmoud Abbas branded Hamas 'murderous terrorists', sacked Hamas-led government and replaced it with emergency cabinet led by PM Salam Fayyad 17 June." [*Crisis Watch*, 1 July, 2007]

"A third day of deadly clashes between Hamas and Fatah fighters suggests that the Palestinian unity government, put together under Saudi auspices at the end of March, is something of a fiction...the continuing battle between Fatah and Hamas for power in Gaza also makes the likelihood of substantive peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians ever more distant." [*The New York Times*, 15 May, 2007]

"Israel and the Palestinian Authority agreed Tuesday to immediately launch peace negotiations in order to reach an agreement by the end of 2008, U.S. President George Bush said in his remarks at the Middle East peace conference in Annapolis, Maryland." [*www.haaretz.com*, 27 November, 2007]

"The first peace talks are to be held December 12, Bush said, and are to continue biweekly after that... 'The (final peace) settlement will establish Palestine as a homeland for the Palestinian people just as Israel is the homeland for the Jewish people,' said Bush." [*www.haaretz.com*, 27 November, 2007]

"In his address, Olmert said Israel was ready for painful concessions for peace, and to dramatically change the reality that emerged following the 1967 Six-Day War." [*www.haaretz.com*, 27 November, 2007]

"In his address, Abbas called for an end to the 'occupation of all Palestinian lands since 1967, including East Jerusalem, as well as the Syrian Golan and occupied Lebanese territory,' as well as a solution to the Palestinian refugee problem." [*www.haaretz.com*, 27 November, 2007]

2006 After Ariel Sharon was incapacitated by a major stroke in early January, Ehud Olmert became the acting Prime Minister. Olmert led the recently formed Kadima party to victory in March elections, and officially took the post of Prime Minister in April. In January Palestinian elections, Hamas won an overwhelming majority, and in February Palestinian President Abbas asked Hamas to form the government, despite international threats to cut off aid to the Palestinian Authority if Hamas took control, as well as threats by Olmert to sever ties with Abbas if Hamas formed the government. Hamas' Ismail Haniyeh became the new Prime Minister. Tensions

between Hamas and Abbas' Fatah party continued to rise and the two parties failed to form a unity government, resulting in violent clashes between supporters of both sides. International actors continued to call Hamas a terrorist organization, and the Quartet (U.S., Russia, EU, UN) agreed to temporary measures to channel aid to the Palestinians while bypassing the Palestinian Authority, in response to embargoes on giving funds to Hamas. In November, Hamas and Fatah agreed to a blueprint for a unity government led by Hamas-nominated and Abbas-approved Prime Minister Muhammed Shubair, but talks were stalled at the end of the year. In response to stalled negotiations, Abbas called for early elections, but Hamas rejected this idea as a "coup."

In June, Hamas ended a 16-month informal peace agreement when Israel resumed military offensives in Gaza, after the kidnapping of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit. A UN resolution urging Israel to stop its Gaza offensive was vetoed in the Security Council by the U.S., and other international efforts promoting a prisoner exchange and mutual ceasefire also failed. At the end of November, a cease-fire took hold in the region. The fighting in Gaza was overshadowed, however, by the 34-day war between Hezbollah and Israel, which also led the Israeli government to shelve its plan to dismantle Jewish settlements in the West Bank.

"The Israeli government's plan to dismantle some Jewish settlements in the West Bank and redraw the country's borders is being shelved at least temporarily, a casualty of the war in Lebanon, government officials said. The plan, which propelled Prime Minister Ehud Olmert to victory in March elections and was warmly endorsed by President Bush as a way of solving Israel's conflicts with the Palestinians, is no longer a top priority, Olmert told his ministers last weekend, according to one of his advisers." [Doug Struck, *Washington Post*, August 23, 2006]

"Hamas made its first parliamentary appointments on Wednesday as Israel prepared to decide on its strategy towards the Palestinians after the Islamic militant group takes up the reigns of power. It named Mahmoud al-Zahar from Gaza, one of its most hardline leaders, as head of the Hamas majority faction in the legislature, which convenes on Saturday for its first session since the group won the Jan. 25 Palestinian election... Israeli officials have said Israel is trying to persuade donor nations to cut off support for the Palestinian Authority once a parliament dominated by Hamas is sworn in." [Reuters, February 15, 2006]

"Israel's decision to transfer the taxes also indicated that Mr. Olmert is trying to avoid crises during the transition period. Israel collects the taxes and customs duties on behalf of the Palestinians under a long-standing economic accord and has in the past withheld them from time to time for political reasons...Israel had delayed the transfer of January taxes last week, on grounds that Hamas, which has killed hundreds of Israelis in terror bombings, could use the money to pay for attacks. IN deciding Sunday to release the money, Israel's cabinet stated that payments may be frozen after Hamas forms the next Palestinian government... The transfer of the money is crucial to the functioning of the Palestinian Authority. Halting the payments would deepen the government's financial crisis and could expand the social chaos in the West Bank and Gaza Strip if the government were forced to order wide-scale layoffs. At the same time, Israel's withholding of the money could add to the growing international pressure on Hamas to renounce violence and recognize Israel before it takes power...With Israel imposing conditions on the monthly tax transfers, Hamas might have an interest in delaying the formation of its government as much as possible to give it more time to come up with alternate sources of funding. Senior Hamas leaders have embarked on a tour of Arab and Muslim nations to try to enlist their financial support." [Laurie Copans, *The Globe and Mail*, February 6, 2006]

2005 In August Israel unilaterally dismantled Israeli settlements in Gaza and pulled out all ground troops after meetings between Palestinian Authority President Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Sharon failed to achieve an agreement on cooperation during the withdrawal and on the future status of Gaza. The construction of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Jerusalem continued in violation of Israel's commitments under the US peace "road map" increasing the overall number of Israeli settlers in the occupied territories. The Israeli Supreme Court ordered several sections of the "separation barrier" to be altered while allowing its construction to take place within the West Bank.

Abbas' Fatah party won local Palestinian elections but was significantly weakened by in-fighting and by Hamas which made significant gains. Preparations for parliamentary elections have been marred by violence and fraud

and a new coalition of independents split from Fatah to contest the Palestinian parliamentary elections. Sharon, facing opposition from members of his Likud party, triggered 2006 Israeli elections when he left Likud to form a new party, Kadima.

"Israel's border with a future Palestinian state will roughly follow the route of the contentious barrier Israel is building along and inside the West Bank, a top ally of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon was quoted Thursday as saying. The comments by Justice Minister Tzipi Livni buttressed Palestinian claims that the fortifications of electrified fences, 25-foot-high concrete walls and razor wire is meant to take land they want for a future state and is not motivated by security." [*The Globe and Mail*, December 1, 2005]

"Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah party scrambled on Wednesday to salvage a primary election rocked by turmoil that has widened internal rifts ahead of a political battle with its Hamas rival. A day after Abbas suspended voting in response to violence and fraud, Fatah's Central Committee decided to name a 24-member review board, chaired by Abbas, to finalise a list of the party's candidates for a parliamentary election on Jan. 25." [*Reuters*, November 30, 2005]

"On Sunday November 20th he [PM Ariel Sharon] decided to quit Likud, the party he helped found 30 years ago. The next day he went to the president, Moshe Katsav, to request a dissolution of the Knesset, Israel's parliament. Later that day, the Knesset voted to disband itself. And on Wednesday, Mr Katsav signed an order to call an election on March 28th. Mr Sharon will run in the poll at the head of his own centrist party, Kadima (Forward)." [*The Economist*, November 23, 2005]

"Israel on Monday wrapped up its withdrawal of the nearly 9,000 settlers from the Gaza Strip. Despite the pullout, there will almost certainly be more Jewish settlers at the end of this year than at the beginning, said Yariv Oppenheimer, the head of Peace Now, an Israeli group that opposes settlement building. The West Bank settler population is now around 240,000. And that number is growing by more than 10,000 a year, which will offset those who have been removed, even if none of the evacuees resettle in the West Bank. And the figures do not include Israelis in East Jerusalem, which Israel annexed after capturing it in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war." [Greg Myre, *International Herald Tribune*, August 23, 2005]

"After their first summit in four months on June 21st, Ariel Sharon and Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) cancelled a planned joint press conference. The Israeli and Palestinian leaders had agreed on virtually nothing over how to co-ordinate Israel's evacuation of its Gaza settlements in August and what will happen to Gaza next. Their standard positions—Israel accusing the Palestinian Authority (PA) of doing too little to stop terrorist attacks, the PA complaining that Israel was undermining it by making too few concessions to ease Palestinians' lives under occupation—seemed to become even more entrenched." [*The Economist*, June 23, 2005]

2004 The November 11 death of Yasser Arafat triggered elections for a new Palestinian Authority president in early 2005. The Israeli cabinet approved a plan drafted by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to begin a full troop pullout from the Gaza Strip although no firm timeline was set. In a historic vote in October, the Israeli parliament approved Sharon's plan to dismantle Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip. The US hailed the vote as step forward in the peace process but rifts within Sharon's Likud party and continued resistance from Israeli settlers and religious groups pose major obstacles to its implementation. The Israeli high court ruled in June that parts of controversial West Bank security wall were illegal. In Lebanon, Syria bowed to UN pressure and announced that it would remove 3,000 of its troops.

"The decision by the Israeli High Court of Justice to order changes to the route of a section of the West Bank barrier is likely to have a significant impact on future construction." [*BBC News*, June 30, 2004]

"Jordan has criticised Israel for its construction of the West Bank barrier on the second day of hearings at the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Israel's neighbour said it feared the barrier would create an exodus of refugees which would strain the country's resources. But Israel pressed

ahead, starting work on a new section of the barrier. Israel says the barrier keeps suicide bombers out of the Jewish state, but Palestinians say it is a land grab." [BBC News, February 24, 2004]

2003 Following January elections Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and his Likud party retained control of the government through a coalition with members of nationalist and religious political parties reluctant to compromise with the Palestinian Authority. In April, the "Quartet" of the US, UN, European Union and Russia unveiled a "Performance-based roadmap to a permanent two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict," a three-year, three-phased proposal to end the conflict and create a Palestinian state. A June summit in Jordan, attended by Prime Minister Sharon, Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmud Abbas (newly-appointed by President Arafat under pressure from the US) and President Bush, resulted in the declaration of a ceasefire by the main Palestinian militant groups, and the withdrawal of Israeli soldiers from certain areas within the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

The ceasefire collapsed in August following a Palestinian suicide bombing and Israeli retaliatory strikes, leading to a resumption of violence. Furthermore, Abbas resigned in September citing power struggles with Arafat, a lack of support from the Palestinian parliament and an uncooperative Israeli government. The Israeli government then withdrew its support from the "road map" process, claiming the Palestinian authorities had proven incapable of ending attacks by Palestinian militants, and unilaterally undertook measures aimed at securing Israel. These included assassinations of leaders of armed Palestinian groups and construction of a security fence around parts of the West Bank. The wall was condemned by many members of the international community for its impact on Palestinians living in villages through which the wall would pass. The collapse of the "road map" also resulted in alternative peace agreements such as the "Geneva Initiative" of several prominent Israeli and Palestinian figures under the auspices of the Swiss government. The initiative was not recognized by either the Israeli government or the Palestinian Authority, however.

"Israel rejected yesterday an overwhelming call by the United Nations [144 countries in favour, 4 opposed, 12 abstentions] to dismantle a massive barrier being built in the West Bank, with a top official dismissing the General Assembly as hostile to the Jewish state... The General Assembly's call to dismantle the West Bank barrier was passed late Tuesday after more than six hours of negotiations. The compromise resolution wasn't legally binding, but was seen as a gauge of world opinion." [globeandmail.com, October 23, 2003]

"The U.S. administration plans to penalize Israel for continuing to build a mammoth security fence around the West Bank and parts of Jerusalem to try and thwart terrorist infiltrations and suicide bombings. The move likely will involve deducting costs of the fence from the \$9 billion in U.S.-backed loan guarantees approved for Israel during the next several years. The action follows months of unsuccessful attempts by Washington to persuade Jerusalem to reassess the nature and route of the project." [defensenews.com, October 13, 2003]

"The Palestinian militant groups Islamic Jihad and Hamas issued a joint statement Friday formally ending their seven-week-old truce because of an Israeli air strike that killed a top militant leader. The statement blamed Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon for wrecking the truce that the Palestinian militants declared unilaterally on June 29 and which Israel considered dead after a massive suicide bombing in Jerusalem Tuesday." [Agence France Presse, August 22, 2003]

"The first of three phases in the 'map' demands a cessation of violence, rebuilding of the Palestinian security apparatus and Palestinian political reforms by May 2003. There is a sweetener for Palestinians, in the form of a call for Israel to freeze settlements, including 'natural growth'... The second phase aims to create a neutered Palestinian state with 'provisional' borders by December [2003]. This phase will be launched by an international conference. Another conference will inaugurate the third phase of negotiations on a permanent agreement by 2005. The details are left vague. The 'map' speaks of a deal that 'ends the occupation that began in 1967' and offers no solution to resolving the main stumbling blocks of past negotiations - the status of Jerusalem, the future of settlements and the fate of Palestinian refugees." [telegraph.co.uk, May 1, 2003]

"Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat took another dramatic step toward political irrelevance yesterday as the Palestinian legislature voted to create the new position of prime minister, with the sole right to hire and fire cabinet ministers. Mr. Arafat tried to water down the law creating the new post,

which will absorb many of his existing powers... Mr. Arafat made a[n unsuccessful] last-ditch plea Monday night to members of his own Fatah faction, which dominates the legislature, to allow him a greater measure of control over the prime minister... Mr. Arafat agreed to appoint a prime minister only under intense international pressure - particularly from Israel and the United States. They have made it clear that a transfer of power is a precondition to the resumption of peace talks with Israel... The PM-to-be [Mahmoud Abbas] co-founded Fatah with Mr. Arafat and is currently his deputy at the Palestine Liberation Organization. In recent years he has been a relative moderate, playing a crucial role in negotiating peace agreements with Israel in the 1990s." [*globeandmail.com*, March 19, 2003]

"Mr Sharon set out his policy prior to winning a vote of approval in the Israeli parliament (Knesset) for his coalition government, formed after last month's elections... Parliament's vote of approval for the new government is largely a formality as Mr Sharon controls more than half of the Knesset's 120 seats with his Likud Party's coalition partners. He has an eight-seat majority in the house after deals were made with the National Religious Party (NRP), the ultra-nationalist National Union Party (NUP) and the secularist Shinui in the aftermath of January's elections... A senior official in the Labour Party, which is now in opposition, described the new government as the most rightist and extremist in the history of the state." [*BBC News*, February 27, 2003]

2002 A suicide bombing in Netanya during Passover killed 28 people and prompted an Israeli military campaign to occupy Palestinian cities and towns. In May and again in September, Israeli troops besieged Yasser Arafat's Ramallah compound. In response, the United Nations Security Council passed resolution 1402 demanding an end to the siege and a withdrawal of Israeli troops from Palestinian towns. In June, the Israeli government introduced a new policy to seize and hold more Palestinian-administered territory each time Israel suffered a terrorist attack and started construction of a 360 km security fence near Jenin. In October, the ruling coalition collapsed and crisis elections were called for January 2003. The militant group Hamas pulled out of talks to form a united Palestinian front and refused to end its attacks on civilians. However, there were some signs of peace. A growing number of Israelis refused to serve in the territories. The United Nations, the European Union, the United States and Russia, "the Quartet," pushed for a peace deal that envisioned the creation of a Palestinian state within three years, and in March the UN Security Council passed its first resolution calling for an Israeli and Palestinian state "side by side" in the region.

2001 In February, Ariel Sharon won an overwhelming victory against his opponent, Ehud Barak, to become Israel's new Prime Minister. A day after the election Sharon announced there would be no peace talks until violence and terror came to an end. By July, the Israeli security cabinet gave approval to the military to "liquidate" anyone it regarded as a potential terrorist. In November, the United Nations announced that it would be cutting back its UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) from 4,500 to 2,000 by July 2002.

"Right wing Ariel Sharon has won an historic landslide victory in the special Israeli prime minister elections. The former general and defense minister, nicknamed 'Bulldozer', captured 62.6 percent of the vote, with 99.9 percent of ballots papers counted, a 25 percent majority. His opponent, Ehud Barak, resigned as Labour party leader and quit his seat in the Knesset, the Israel parliament immediately after the defeat." [*CNN*, February, 7, 2001]

"Right wing Israel Prime Minister-elect Ariel Sharon said his government would not enter negotiations with the Palestinians until attacks stopped. 'The government I will lead will make every effort to reach peace, but the conditions for starting peace talks is the cessation of terror and violence,' said Sharon." [*CNN*, February 8, 2001]

"Israel is to step up its policy of assassinating suspected Palestinian militants, defying international opinion. The security cabinet voted after four hours of heated debate to give the army almost complete freedom in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to liquidate anyone it regarded as a potential terrorist." [*The Guardian*, July 5, 2001]

"The UN intends to eventually reduce the UNIFIL to a strength of around 2,000 personnel by July 2002 in line with a plan to turn the peacekeeping force into an armed observer mission deployed along the UN-delineated Blue Line, which corresponds to the Lebanon-Israel border." [*Janes Defense Weekly*, November 21, 2001]

2000 Following the early unilateral withdrawal of Israeli troops from its southern region, Lebanon declared 25 May "Resistance and Liberation Day," an annual public holiday. However, Lebanon refused to deploy its army in the region until a "comprehensive" Middle East peace deal was reached (covering Israel, Palestine and Syria), putting on hold the full deployment of a 5,400 UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Meanwhile, final status negotiations deadlocked after Israel and Palestine missed the February deadline for a framework agreement and two weeks of negotiations at Camp David failed, mainly due to competing claims over Jerusalem. In September US President Clinton pushed the two parties to work toward a final peace agreement, putting forth a number of proposals, most opposed by both communities and Mr. Barak's cabinet. In October, an emergency Arab Summit failed to take strong action against Israel and an Israel-Palestine summit announced a cease-fire that was not respected by either side. Facing increasing internal pressure, Barak called off the peace process by the end of October, leaving both parties to consider unilateral action.

[Sources: *BBC News*, 7 December 2000, 14 November 2000, 7 February 2001; *The Globe and Mail*, 23 October 2000, 27 December 2000, 7 February 2001; *The Christian Monitor*, 24 October 2000]

"The Bush administration has said the United States no longer subscribes to the Middle East peace proposals put forward by the former President Bill Clinton...They feel Mr. Clinton got too closely involved in the details of peacemaking, something which President Bush wants to avoid..." [*BBC News*, 9 February 2001]

"Palestinians want Israel to return virtually all of the land it seized during the 1967 war, including East Jerusalem, and to allow the return of an estimated four million Palestinians who fled or were forced to leave their homes in the 1948 and 1967 wars. Both goals are enshrined in various UN Security Council resolutions. The overriding Palestinian objective remains a fully independent Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital." [*The Globe and Mail*, 6 July 2000]

1999 Following May elections in Israel which saw Labour Party leader Ehud Barak become Prime Minister, Israeli and Palestinian authorities started final-status talks in November 1999 and the resumption of peace talks between Israel and Syria followed in December. At year's end, Israel maintained troops in Lebanon, but pledged that its forces would go home by July 2000.

"The Israeli military high command has begun discussions on a withdrawal from Lebanon. Military sources told *Jane's Defence Weekly* that the plan being drafted only presents several scenarios, one of which is unilateral withdrawal. Prime Minister Ehud Barak ordered the effort in August as part of his pledge to withdraw troops from Lebanon by July 2000." [*Jane's Defence Weekly*, October 1999]

"Israel and the Palestinians started negotiations last month hoping to achieve a final peace accord by September 2000 which must also tackle the status of Jerusalem, the fate of millions of Palestinian refugees and borders." [*Reuters*, December 9, 1999]

"Prime Minister Ehud Barak left Israel on Tuesday for the first peace talks with Syria in nearly four years, saying he felt an historic responsibility to try to end five decades of hostility." [*Reuters*, December 14, 1999]

1998 A 19-month hiatus in the Oslo peace process ended when a US-brokered accord in October approved withdrawal of Israeli troops from an additional 13 percent of the West Bank, among other conditions. Within weeks the announcement of an Israeli election stalled the process again. In response to growing political opposition to Israeli casualties in occupied southern Lebanon, Israel accepted a 20 year-old UN resolution calling for withdrawal from Lebanese territory. Israeli conditions placed on the pull-back were not accepted by Lebanon, however.

"As pieced together by remarks from American, Israeli and Palestinian diplomats the agreement, hammered out at the Wye Plantation negotiating site in Maryland, met the minimum requirements for breathing new life into the five-year-old Oslo process, which has been stalled for 19 months." [*InterPress Service*, October 23, 1998]

"Last week, Mr. Netanyahu was forced to agree to go to the polls early after his coalition government lost its majority in the Knesset amid criticism of his handling of the peace accord with

the Palestinians. The election date has not been set but may not be held until at least the end of April..." [*Globe and Mail*, December 28, 1998]

"Israel on Wednesday formally accepted a 20-year-old U.N. Security Council resolution calling on it to withdraw from Lebanese territory. But the Israelis said any pullback would be made only on the condition that Lebanon assume control over the region and prevent its use for attacks on Israel." [*The New York Times*, April 2, 1998]

1997 Palestinian opposition to Israeli housing construction and limited offers of troop withdrawals, and Israeli outrage at Hamas suicide bombings, brought the Oslo peace process to a halt by mid-year. Later, renewed peace talks sponsored by the US made little progress, leaving the process timetable well behind schedule.

"Negotiations on the final status of the occupied territories as well as of Jerusalem, borders, Israeli settlements, refugees, and other matters began in May 1996 but were immediately adjourned and have not been resumed. According to the timetable set out in the 1993 Israel-PLO Declaration of Principles, the interim period is to conclude in May 1999." [*The Occupied Territories Report on Human Rights Practices for 1997*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, US State Department, January 30, 1998]

"In response to last week's double-suicide bombing at a Jerusalem market that killed 13 people and the bombers, Israel has sealed the borders of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, blocking many Palestinians from their jobs, suspended peace talks and cut off the transfer of crucial tax revenue to Mr. Arafat's Palestinian Authority." [*Globe and Mail*, August 6, 1997, pA11]

Background:

The 1917 Balfour Declaration supporting a Jewish homeland in Palestine, although long opposed by Palestinians, encouraged increased Jewish immigration under British rule. In 1947, the UN partition of Palestine to create the state of Israel led to immediate conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbours. Three wars ended with the flight of Palestinians to neighbouring states and with Israeli territorial gains, including the occupation of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip in the south, and the Golan Heights in the north. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), founded in 1964 with support from the Arab League, soon led the struggle for a Palestinian state. Since 1955, Israel has violated a number of key UN resolutions which it feels are biased, often with the tacit or explicit support of the United States. In an effort to consolidate Israeli sovereignty over the newly-occupied territories, Israel also began large-scale construction of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza fragmenting the Palestinian population into isolated enclaves and forcing them onto the least productive lands.

In response to Lebanese-based PLO attacks, Israel invaded Lebanon in 1978 and 1982, when over 12,000 people, including 500 Israelis, died. The second Israeli invasion drove the PLO from Lebanon and, upon withdrawal in 1985, Israel created a southern "security zone," patrolled by the proxy, initially Christian, South Lebanese Army (SLA), and intended to prevent attacks on northern Israel. Iranian-backed Hezbollah Shi'ite Muslims, who seek an end to the Israeli occupation of South Lebanon, have the tacit support of the Lebanese government and its Syrian backers. Growing domestic political opposition to Israeli troop casualties in occupied southern Lebanon led Israel to accept a 20-year-old UN resolution calling for withdrawal from Lebanese territory, and Israeli troops left the region in May 2000. Tensions remain however in the disputed border territory of Shebaa Farms.

Although Egypt signed a 1979 peace treaty with Israel, it was not until after the 1991 Gulf War that PLO-Israeli talks, conducted secretly in Norway, ended with a peace accord providing partial Palestinian self-rule in Gaza and the West Bank. This began in Gaza and Jericho in 1994, despite opposition from Islamic and Jewish groups that led to the assassination of the Israeli Prime Minister in 1995. In 1994 Israel and Jordan also formally ended their joint state of war. A second Israeli-Palestinian accord, signed in late 1995, stalled in 1996 when a new Israeli government ignored or reversed earlier commitments and peace talks with Syria ground to a halt.

A 19-month hiatus in the Oslo peace process ended when the US-brokered Wye River Memorandum in October 1998 approved withdrawal of Israeli troops from an additional 13 per cent of the West Bank, among other conditions. However, within weeks the announcement of an Israeli election stalled the process again. Final

status negotiations resumed in November 1999 only to deadlock early in 2000. Since September 2000, a second "intifada" has heightened Palestinian civilian resistance and conflict violence was increased in unrelenting rounds of Israeli military attacks and assassinations and suicide bombings by Hamas and other militant groups. The 2003 "road map" to peace, prepared by the "quartet" of the US, Russia, the UN and the European Union, was well-received by the Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and newly-appointed Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmud Abbas. Peace talks between the two parties collapsed in late 2003 however, when the Israeli security forces and Palestinian militant groups failed to end their attacks. In November 2004, long-time Palestinian leader Yassar Arafat died and was succeeded in January 2005 by Mahmoud Abbas, also a member of the Fatah party.

Since 2006, Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations have been complicated by the conflict between the two major Palestinian factions: Fatah, the largest party, and Hamas, an Islamist militant group. Following Hamas' January 2006 Palestinian parliamentary election victory and its subsequent takeover of the Fatah headquarters in the Gaza Strip in June 2007, the Palestinian National Authority has been split between Fatah in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza. Since Hamas is considered a terrorist organization by Israel and many other countries, it has not been allowed to participate in official negotiations. In spite of this, the latest round of peace negotiations began in the USA in November 2007 with the goal of attaining an agreement by the end of 2008.

[Sources: "Hamas takes full control of Gaza", *BBC News*, 15 June 2007 and "Palestinian rivals: Fatah and Hamas", *BBC News*, 17 June 2007]

"Aided by generous government incentives, the number of Jewish settlers in the Palestinian territories more than doubled in the years since the 1993 Oslo accords. Along with about 180,000 settlers in East Jerusalem, there are now about 225,000 settlers in the West Bank dotted across roughly 150 heavily fortified settlements, and about 7,000 in crowded Gaza. The Palestinian population in the two territories numbers about 3.5 million." [*globeandmail.com*, August 1, 2003]

"The United Nations General Assembly has strongly criticised Israel, calling its policies on Jerusalem and the Golan Heights illegal. The Assembly adopted a number of resolutions supporting the Palestinian cause which were opposed by the United States and Israel. The resolutions condemned continued Jewish settlement building in the occupied territories and the plight of thousands of Palestinians forced to live in camps or in other countries." [*BBC News*, December 2, 1999]

Arms Sources:

The United States is by far the largest foreign arms supplier to Israel which also has a substantial domestic arms industry. Germany and France are also recent suppliers, although Germany suspended most of its arms sales temporarily in 2002 in response to Israel's aggression in the West Bank. Palestinian groups receive weapons and training from neighbouring Arab states. Large numbers of weapons are now being smuggled into the Gaza Strip via tunnels originating in Egypt. These guns are said to be Russian- and Chinese-made, with some AK47's flowing in from Sudan.

"The Hamas military takeover of Gaza last week was partly fueled by caches of weapons smuggled through tunnels below this gritty Sinai border town. Two days spent with smugglers here suggest that to stanch the flow of weapons, Egypt will have to address the economic and social concerns of the region, and not rely solely on its security forces."

"They said, almost without exception, that the business of ferrying weapons was more about profit than ideology. Working with small construction tools like jackhammers, people here said they dug a tunnel to Gaza in about six months. The shoulder-width passages were often strung with lights and a mechanized pulley system – like a tow rope at a ski lift – to deliver the merchandise."

"One person said that most of the weapons smuggled into Gaza were Russian- and Chinese-made. Others said that the guns, often AK-47s, may have come from Sudan and moved through Egypt." [Source: The New York Times, 17 June, 2007]

"Since Israel pulled out of the Gaza Strip a year ago, the number of tunnels for smuggling

weapons, drugs and other contraband has more than doubled, evolving into an underground maze clawed out of Gaza's soft soil." [Sarah El Deeb, *Seattle Pi*, December 17, 2006]

"Jewish settlers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip have more than 10,000 weapons to defend themselves against Palestinian attacks, an Israeli Defense Ministry report published on Sunday. The report reveals that 8,000 automatic rifles, machine pistols and ordinary handguns are available to settlers on the West Banks and a further 2,500 to those on the Gaza Strip. In addition, the settlers' own territorial units have heavy armoury, machine guns and mortars available for the defense of their settlements." [Agence France Presse, April 12, 2003]

Economic Factors:

Years of discrimination, poverty, and unemployment endured by Israel's Arabs as well as the continuing deprivation and restrictions on the freedom of movement suffered by the Palestinian population has significantly contributed to the high level of frustration and the outbursts of violence in recent years. Extreme poverty has plagued Gaza ever since Hamas took power in the Strip in June 2007. With international backers withdrawing, as well as aid agencies, estimates are that over 65% of the Palestinians in Gaza are living in poverty. The region has all but shut down with tens of thousands of people being laid off from jobs that can no longer be performed due to supply blockades. Supplies allowed into Gaza were restricted to humanitarian foodstuffs and medicines.

"After declaring Gaza an 'enemy entity' in September, Israel has kept Gaza's borders sealed save for humanitarian foodstuffs and medicines. The policy has triggered dramatic inflation, shuttered (sic) businesses, and spurred demand for black-market goods smuggled through tunnels that were once used by gun runners and drug dealers."

"The anti-Hamas camp of Fatah, Israel and the West is grappling with a problem: while opening Karni and another crossing at Rafah could help revive the expiring economy of Gaza, it could also help strengthen Hamas, which Western governments consider a terrorist group, and its chances of success." [The New York Times, 9 July, 2007]

"Economic decline has been rapid since Hamas seized Gaza by force in June and Israel closed the territory's borders in an unprecedented lockdown. Most factories have closed, tens of thousands lost their jobs and exports and most imports are frozen. Roughly 75 percent of the 1.5 million Gazans now live in poverty, according to Palestinian government officials." [thestar.com, 24 November, 2007]

"In response to the firing of rockets into Israel, and to keep up the pressure on Hamas, which seized control of the internal affairs of Gaza from its rival Fatah back in the summer, Israel has stopped almost all goods going in and out. By one measure used by the World Bank, 67% of Gaza's population now lives in poverty." [BBC News, 20 December, 2007]

"Oxfam put it more colourfully. It said: '[The aid money] is being poured into a leaking bucket. The challenge is to fix the leak not pour faster. Due to Israel's movement restrictions and the blockade of Gaza, millions of dollars of aid for Palestinians are being lost. Ending these restrictions is the only way to make the money pledged count.'" [BBC News, 20 December, 2007]

"Israel retained extensive control over, and placed restrictions on, the freedom of movement of all West Bank and Gaza Strip Palestinians. These policies obstructed Palestinian economic activity and access to health care, schools and universities, places of worship, and family members in other parts of the territories or in Israeli prisons. On October 25, 1999, Israel opened a 'safe passage' allowing some increased movement between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, but the arbitrary nature of the criteria for issuing travel permits and their indiscriminate imposition on an entire population assured that the restrictions remained a form of collective punishment. Following September 29 Israel increased restrictions on movement into, out of, and within the West Bank and Gaza Strip." [Human Rights Watch, 2001 World Report]

57 Erb Street West
Waterloo, Ontario, Canada N2L 6C2
tel (519) 888-6541 fax (519) 888-0018 Email: plough@ploughshares.ca